



Play and Learning 4

Talking, reading and playing

Communication is important for survival, belonging, learning and wellbeing.

- During the first years of life, your child's ability to **communicate and understand others develops quickly**.
- **Finding time to play together every day shows them you enjoy being together** and playing what they like.
- **Children love you to talk and listen to them** during daily activities such as mealtimes, bath time and sharing books.

When it comes to talking, reading and playing:

- **babies** start to communicate from the time they are born – listening and responding when you speak to them, imitating sounds, babbling, smiling, laughing and crying. Lots of single words start to appear between 12 to 18 months (most 18 month olds have at least 20 to 24 words). These early words may not sound exactly like they should, for example, 'wawa' for 'water'.
- **toddlers** usually have a rapid increase in the number and type of words they use at around 2 years. Between 2 to 2½ years, toddlers start to join words together to make short sentences ('Daddy gone', 'Big dog'). By the age of 3, toddlers can speak in 4 or 5 word sentences, and familiar adults should understand them most of the time.
- **young children** are able to make more complex sentences using words like 'because', 'but', 'so', 'if' and 'then'.

You can have conversations as your child is able to listen to, and tell, long stories, and begin to enjoy jokes. They love asking questions ('Why?', 'When?', 'How?') and most children can tell you their name, age and address.

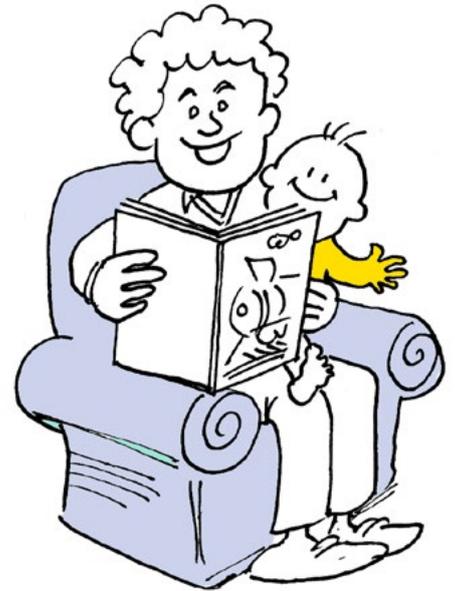
What you can do

- **Respond to your baby's sounds, exclamations, 'words' and 'conversations'** – smile and say their sounds back to them.
- **Take turns when you talk and play** – pause to listen and speak just like you would in an adult conversation. This gives your child a chance to respond in some way (sounds, actions, facial expressions).
- **Make reading a special time** such as part of the bedtime routine.
- **Look at what your child is doing and talk about that** – say 'Bang Bang' as they bang two blocks together, 'You threw the ball', or 'You're pushing the car, broom broom'.
- **Play together** with your baby or young child some time each day in a quiet, uncluttered space. Follow your child's lead and let them decide how they want to play.



Some activities to try

- **With baby** – Play turn-taking games with sounds (like ‘Boo’ or ‘Peek a boo’), and action rhymes (like ‘Round and round the garden’, ‘This little piggie’).
- **Have fun playing with words and sounds** – ‘Let’s have lunch, munch, munch’, or ‘Cow goes moo’.
- **Share books together often** – Books with bright, clear pictures are best. Let your child join in by helping to turn pages and taking turns to point at and talk about the pictures. Encourage comments and questions. Babies will suck and mouth books, and experiment by scrunching paper. Board books with no pull-out pieces are best for babies.
- **Make your own books** – cut out pictures from magazines and catalogues. Talk about the pictures, colours and objects.
- **Visit the library** for story time and to borrow books.



- **Creative play** – playdough, collage, painting and making things from boxes gives your child a chance to practise asking for things and to talk about what they’re doing.
- **Pretend play** helps your child develop language by using of their imagination. If your child is playing with toy animals, add something that they can pretend is water, like blue paper. You may have to show your child how to use ‘the water’ into their play. Older children may enjoy acting out a favourite book.
- **Go on outings** to the city, shops or park. Talk about what you do and see.

Keeping your child safe

- Supervise your child closely at all times especially around water, play equipment, or when using objects such as scissors, pencils, glue or paint. Avoid flammable or toxic materials.
- Babies, toddlers and young children can choke on small toys and objects. Regularly check toys to make sure they are safe and in good condition.
 - Toys should be bigger than a 20 cent coin.
 - Strings on toys should be less than 20 centimetres long.
- Do a safety check and make sure your home is safe for your child to actively explore.

Find out more

For more information on play, learning, and a range of other topics, visit:

- playgroupwa.com.au
- bringingupgreatkids.org
- raisingchildren.net.au
- cahs.health.wa.gov.au/childhealthresources

For more information about the metropolitan **Child Development Service** phone 1300 551 827 or visit cahs.health.wa.gov.au/childdevelopment

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

This publication is provided for general education and information purposes. Contact a qualified healthcare professional for any medical advice needed.

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